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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the concept of emotional intelligence and the application of the concept to the field of educational administration and leadership. Emotional intelligence (EQ) includes such skills as self-awareness, managing emotions, self-motivation, empathy, and handling relationships by managing emotions in others. Much of the research conducted on the importance of EQ, as opposed to intelligence quotient (IQ), had been related to the study of organizational leadership and development. EQ research has found that the lack of EQ skills, or emotional illiteracy, lowers team effectiveness and creates dysfunctional team interactions, and that the most effective performers within large organizations are often those with the best networking skills. It is argued that educational leadership preparation programs should systematically and intentionally include the EQ research and knowledge base. Internships and clinical experiences should include planned opportunities for teaming, networking, conflict-management, and negotiations. The paper concludes by discussing a study that the Department of Educational Leadership at East Carolina University is undertaking to assess EQ skills among its students. (Contains 40 references.) (MDM)

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Emotional Intelligence and Educational Leadership at East Carolina University

A Paper Presented at the 51st Annual Conference of the National Council for Professors of Educational Administration

by

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to recognize feelings, control emotional balance, maintain a positive attitude when confronted by frustrations and difficulties, and connect with the feelings of others. Although the concept of emotional intelligence has now entered the lexicon of popular culture, it is supported by a decade of substantive behavioral research. This paper examines the concept of emotional intelligence and the application of this concept to the field of educational administration and leadership.

Emotional Intelligence and Educational Leadership

James O. McDowelle and Edwin D. Bell

Background and Introduction

For years school leaders have attempted to pinpoint that "indefinable something " that separated successful leaders from unsuccessful leaders. Practitioners and university professors agree that success in school leadership is dependent upon more than technical skill academically defined intelligence (Greenfield, 1980; Griffiths, 1988; Hodgkinson, 1991; Matsumoto & Sanders, (1988); Murphy, 1993; and Sergiovanni, 1992). But the lack of precise definitions and empirical research to support assertions regarding these nonobservable variables have long made the attempt to discuss these intangible leadership qualities difficult.

A real life incident illustrates the problems caused when a school administrator lacks that "indefinable something". An urban superintendent plagued by recurring problems in the gifted and talented (G&T) program, promised to get the most capable person available to fill the position. Her search led to McGill University in Canada which featured a state-of- the-art, cutting-edge program in the design and administration of programs for the gifted and talented. A graduate of this program was recruited to come to the urban area school system to lead the G&T program. During the selection process, the G&T administrator dazzled the interview committees and the superintendent with his technical mastery, articulate presentation, and high-energy personality. Glowing recommendations accompanied the administrator's exceptional curriculum vitae and he was hired. Unfortunately problems eventually emerged as the administrator began to work with the various constituencies involved with the G&T program. Although friendly enough in personal encounters, Mr. G&T appeared dismissive of other viewpoints and preoccupied with his own agenda and task orientation. He saw no reason to enlist the support of

others since it was very clear that he possessed more knowledge in this particular area than anyone he encountered. He believed that merely stating the facts that were so obviously clear to him should be enough to convince others to accept his position. Networking with professional colleagues was, therefore, not an option. In addition, he was not personally empathetic to parents, although in many cases he agreed with their concerns. After meeting with him, they often felt disappointed. Even though he had, in essence, agreed with them, these parents still felt he did not understand, nor sympathize with their plight. Eventually, a critical mass of his detractors formed and the criticism could no longer be ignored. The administrator was called in by the superintendent and apprised of the situation. Having worked so hard and been so sure of his direction, he was devastated to learn his efforts were not appreciated. The devastation was made even greater by the fact that he had no inkling there were any problems with his work. Crushed by what he considered to be a very personal rebuke, he reacted in a way that was disproportionate to the criticism. He became depressed. His job performance suffered, and he eventually resigned his position.

School leaders frequently have seen variations of this scenario acted out in the public school arena. People with excellent credentials are put in leadership positions and fail because of the absence or presence of certain emotional elements. Until recently, we have been unable to describe these emotional components with precision or to support our hunches about their effect with empirically verifiable research. Daniel Goleman (1995), in his book Emotional Intelligence, provided insight and direction to help address this dilemma. Goleman described the emotional components that often cause people with high IQs to fail and people with modest IQs to succeed beyond anyone's expectations. The book was on the New York Times best seller list for more than 40 weeks and is now having an impact on business, professional, and educational

institutions (Confrey, 1995; Farham, 1996; Gibbs, 1996; Murray, 1996; Nelton, 1996; O'Neal, 1996).

The concept of emotional intelligence (EQ) was formulated by Salovey and Mayer (1990). They characterized EQ as combining the intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences described by Harold Gardner (1993). The authors proposed five skill domains that comprise emotional intelligence. These skill domains are (a) Self-Awareness: Knowing yourself and recognizing your feelings; (b) Managing emotions: Regulating your feelings; (c) Motivating oneself: Persisting in the face of frustration and difficulties; (d) Empathy: Perceiving life as others perceive it; and (e) Handling relationships by managing emotions in others. These are social skills, which are used in leadership, teamwork, cooperation and negotiation.

The study of the effect of emotions on performance in the workplace, classroom, and personal relationships has been gaining credibility since the mid-1980s (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). Prior to the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990), Eysenk, Pearson, Easting and Allsopp (1985) conducted research that described emotional development of adults when interacting in varied environments. Sternberg (1988) developed the concept of mental self-management, and reported research supporting the concept. He described mental self-management as the way in which we order and make sense of events that take place in both our internal and external worlds. Sternberg's mental self-management was a lineal precursor to the concept of EQ.

Emotionality in Organizations

Although his work was not ground breaking, Goleman's book (1995) popularized the concept of emotional intelligence and raised awareness of the empirical data that have been compiled to support inquiries on the effects of the emotions on intelligence and performance. Much of the fieldwork and research conducted on the importance of the emotions has been

related to the study of organizational development and leadership (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Howell, 1988; House, Woycke, & Fodor, 1988; Kahn, 1990; Kelly & Caplan, 1993; Williams & Sternberg, 1988). Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) analyzed the ascendance of the notion of rationality and subsequent displacement of emotionality in organizational development literature. Emotionality has either been neglected or perceived in pejorative terms within an organizational context. The disregard of emotionality in the literature describing effective organizations may have erroneously circumscribed our perceptions of organizations. If the emotions are seen as dysfunctional or as barriers to institutional progress, the study of leadership will be constrained and ultimately stunted.

Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) contended that emotionality and rationality are not mutually exclusive concepts and that irrationality is not synonymous with emotionality. The acknowledgment of both elements must occur for an organization to function effectively. For example, the study of motivation within an organization is limited unless human emotion is taken into account. Discussions of motivation must consider the effects of the emotional connection of the person to work (Kahn, 1990). The idea of "flow" (Csikszentmihaly, 1990), the capacity to become totally engaged in work and to be highly motivated by the work itself, has very little to do with rational incentives, but is strongly related to emotional connections to the essence of the work. Emotionality and rationality complement each other in the work world. They can be viewed as inseparable parts of the life of the organization. Rationality and emotionality must both be acknowledged and incorporated into organizational life.

The complementarity of emotionality and rationality in the workplace makes sense because that is the way in which the human brain operates. Proper functioning of the brain is dependent upon the smooth interaction of emotionality and rationality. Goleman (1995) reported

that neurological research supports the notion that emotions are indispensable for rational decision-making. Rationality is centered in the neocortex region of the brain, emotional responses are located in the limbic system, specifically the amygdala. A corporate lawyer suffered damage to the limbic system (Goleman, 1995). Although all his cognitive functions were still intact, he could no longer make even the simplest daily life choices. He could not choose between french fries and mashed potatoes or whether to wear jeans or a suit. More complex decisions became completely impossible because he had no emotional preference and could therefore not use experience in the decision-making process. The emotional responses that inform, and streamline decision-making were lost.

The study of the concept of emotional intelligence is part of a larger movement to expand the belief, knowledge and skill domains of school leadership (English, 1994; Maxcy, 1991; Rost, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1992). Inquiries into the effect of emotional intelligence on educational leadership will inform discussions about the part ethics, collaboration, and democratic decision-making play in the exercise of school leadership.

The Hegelian dialectic can be used to illustrate how the concept of emotional intelligence is expanding the inquiry about the beliefs, skills and knowledge necessary for the exercise of school leadership. Hegel posited the theory that knowledge of reality passed through three phases (Taylor, 1975). One's initial conception of reality he called the thesis. As one obtained conflicting information about the subject, a second conceptual position Hegel called the antithesis emerged. Eventually these opposing ideas were merged into a final phase called synthesis. Early notions about leadership emphasized morality and character and placed little value on technical rational skills (thesis). As school leadership developed as a discipline, English (1994) contends a business ethos also developed that focused on technical-rational skills in law,

finance, planning and management (antithesis). As a consequence, emotions, values and ethics were not prominent in discussions about school leadership. We may now be entering an era when both technical- rational skills and character are considered essential to effective school leadership.

Applications of EQ to School Leadership

The abilities associated with EQ (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) have clear implications for the exercise of school leadership or any other intense, stressful, activity. Successful school leaders should not be unduly deterred from focusing on their responsibilities by the vicissitudes that are part of the daily events in a school or school district. They will be self-aware and cognizant of the effects they have on the people they lead. An effective principal or superintendent must empathize with a variety of stakeholders and constituencies and must work well as a member of a team or as a team leader. An effective leader should be able to transmit the hope that regardless of current problems or issues things will get better in the future. Recalling the Mr. G&T anecdote, his inability to empathize with both parents and professional colleagues created the immediate problem. Once the problem surfaced, he was unable to persist in the face of frustration or to keep distress from hindering his ability to confront the situation and learn from his mistake

Sarason (1982) described serious problems in the selection and recruitment of future school leaders. He also made this point: "Choosing a leader is obviously a crucial process and one in which personality and contextual factors fatefully begin to interact … (Sarason, 1989, p. 47). Research suggested that standards for admittance in graduate administrative preparation programs were so low and the programs so lax that anyone wishing to become an administrator could receive administrative certification and licensure (Hallinger & Murphy, 1991). Criticism of

public school administrator selection processes led the National Commission on Excellence in School Administration (1987) to recommend changes in the recruitment practices of universities and school systems.

Unfortunately, the Commission focused its attention on the performance by future leaders on cognitive tests such as the Graduate Record Examination and the Miller Analogies. Evidence compiled by researchers in areas associated with emotional intelligence suggests that the linkage between cognitive testing and job performance is tenuous. A meta-analysis of cognitive test research conducted by Sternberg, Wagner, Williams and Horvath (1995) concluded that differences in cognitive test performances accounted for between 4% and 25% of variance in job performance. Therefore 75% - 96% of the ability to perform a job is related to other variables. Harold Gardner, the Harvard psychologist asserts that non-IQ factors play the dominant role in determining an individual's place in society (Goleman, 1995). Among the non-IQ factors cited by Gardner are interpersonal intelligence, social skills used in interacting with others, and intrapersonal intelligence, self-knowledge and mental self-management (Gardner, 1993). Intrapersonal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence are closely related to EQ.

Work by Shoda, Mishel and Peake (1990) offered some direction in devising methods to counter the overreliance on cognitive testing in personnel recruitment and selection. The marshmallow test research reported by Shoda, et al. (1990), described a situation in which a 4-year old child was given a marshmallow. The child was told that he would be given two marshmallows if he could resist eating the marshmallow while the researcher was out of the room. The ability of the child to delay gratification as measured by the "marshmallow test" was twice as powerful a predictor of how the child would later perform on the Scholastic Aptitude Test as the child's score on an IQ test. The child's mental self-management and emotional self-

control were also a greater predictor of success and adjustment to life 12 to 14 years after the test (Shoda, et al., 1990).

Attempts to devise adult versions of the marshmallow test are currently under way (Farham, 1996). Some progress in this vein has been made by Martin Seligman (Gibbs, 1996). Metropolitan Life insurance Company contracted with Seligman to develop a test that would ascertain the probable chances for future success of newly hired insurance salesmen. Seligman developed a test to determine levels of optimism or positive attitude in potential employees. Insurance salesmen must be able to handle rejection and maintain a stable emotional balance while experiencing setbacks. The ability of the test to predict success based on emotional characteristics appears strong. Salesmen who scored at the superoptimist level outsold the pessimist by 21 % the first year and 57% the second year (Gibbs, 1996).

Research on Emotional Intelligence

Educational leaders should study the research regarding emotional intelligence and implement practices suggested by empirical data compiled through inquiries about EQ. Managers are learning that the necessity for teaming in the modern day work world requires greater EQ skills (Nelton, 1996). EQ researchers have provided a vocabulary to describe these skills and empirical data to pinpoint effective strategies for teaming. Williams & Sternberg (1988) have conducted research into the impact of EQ skills on the effectiveness of teams. These authors found that a lack of EQ skills, or emotional illiteracy, among members of a team created a lack of harmony among the team and lowered what they call "the group IQ". Dysfunctional interaction among the group lessened the groups' ability to solve problems and act creatively.

Other research on leadership effectiveness highlights the EQ skills used in networking.

Krackhardt & Hanson (1993) described how leaders in organizations that they studied conducted business through an informal series of networks which operated across both functional and formal boundaries. The capability of conducting this type of networking was premised on EQ skills. The networks were found be a much stronger source of organizational communication than those dictated by organizational charts. Kelly & Caplan (1993) conducted research that illustrated the importance of networking for individual career advancement. They studied star performers at Bell Labs and found the most effective were those who were most adept at networking. They reported that these people were able to rely upon their networks when they encountered difficulties on the job. Individuals without networks received inadequate assistance when they sought help. Research is continuing on topics associated with EQ. Educators should follow this work with interest.

Assessing Emotional Intelligence

Members of the faculty in the Department of Educational Leadership at East Carolina University (ECU) believe the empirical data on emotional intelligence offer support for the specific inclusion of specific areas of skill development for leaders. At ECU efforts are underway to include the development of knowledge and skills associated with EQ in the educational leadership curriculum. Some educators might contend that public school leadership preparation programs already include elements related to EQ. The argument presented here is that the concepts and skills ascribed to emotional intelligence should be systematically and intentionally applied throughout the curriculum for leadership development. The curriculum for school leadership must include attention to both content and processes. Content refers to the knowledge and theoretical bases of the curriculum. Processes include field experiences, internships, in-class activities, and other clinical activities. Educational leadership preparation

programs should not only plan for the development of these capabilities but also plan for the assessment of EQ skills and knowledge. To this end, the Department of Educational Leadership at ECU is initiating a longitudinal study to measure students' concepts and skills associated with emotional intelligence, ethical analysis and tolerance of diversity. Pre- and post-tests are planned to determine the effect of the curriculum on EQ capabilities. The assessments to be utilized are the EQ Map (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997), The Defining Issues Test (Rest, 1988, 1989, 1995), and Beliefs about Diversity Scale (Pohan, 1995; Pohan & Aguilar, 1994). Results of this research will be reported as the program progresses.

Conclusion

The concept of emotional intelligence is now part of our popular culture. Despite its "pop culture " status it is based upon serious inquiry and research. Practitioners and professors of educational leadership should study the implications for preparation and practice implicit in the concept. The acceptance of the appropriate place of the emotions in the workplace necessitates close scrutiny of the research, fieldwork and corollary literature linked to emotional intelligence. Education is at its essence a people business. Exclusion of the emotions, motivations and drives of the actors engaged in this enterprise is unnecessarily reductive and restrictive.

School leaders must be cognizant of the opportunities and direction afforded by research associated with EQ. Educational leadership preparation programs should systematically and intentionally include the EQ research and knowledge base. Internships and clinical experiences should include planned opportunities for teaming, networking, conflict-management and negotiations. As public school leaders enter the twenty-first century, we must retain what we do best while being willing to embrace new ideas and concepts. Recognition of the importance of

emotional intelligence is a good step in seeking new directions for the exercise of school leadership.

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